

**STILLWATER STATE FOREST
EWING CENTRAL TIMBER SALE PROJECT
INITIAL PROPOSAL
JULY 3, 2012**

INTRODUCTION

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Stillwater Unit, is proposing the Ewing Central Timber Sale Project. The project is in the initial stages of public involvement and project development for an environmental analysis. This proposal would harvest 1 to 4 million board feet (MMbf) of sawtimber from approximately 3800 acres of state trust land located approximately 20 miles northwest of Whitefish. Harvesting may be proposed in portions of sections 1-3, 10-15, and 23; all in T32N, R22W (see map below).

This project is part of an ongoing effort to produce revenue for the state trusts while maintaining a healthy and productive forest into the future. The Common Schools Trust would be the beneficiary of funds raised by this project.

COMMENT PERIOD

This notice initiates a 30-day comment period, which provides the public an opportunity to become involved at the initial stage of the project. In addition, this document provides general information about the proposal and its objectives. If requested, another notice with greater detail will be sent once the project progresses and proposed harvest units have been defined.

Comments and concerns you may have about harvesting timber and the associated activities, which include roadwork and site preparation, are welcome and will be considered during analysis and the design of the project.

The comment period will remain open until August 2, 2012.

PROJECT PARAMETERS

The lands involved in this proposed project are held by the State of Montana in trust for the support of common schools. The State Board of Land Commissioners and DNRC are required by law to administer these lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long term for these beneficiary institutions, as required in *Section 77-1-202, Montana Codes Annotated (MCA)*.

DNRC will manage the lands involved in this project according to the philosophy and standards in the State Forest Land Management Plan, which states:

"Our premise is that the best way to produce long-term income for the trust is to manage intensively for healthy and biologically diverse forests. Our understanding is that a diverse forest is a dynamic forest that will produce the most reliable and highest long-term revenue stream... In the foreseeable future, timber management will continue to be DNRC's primary source of revenue and primary tool for achieving biodiversity objectives."

Furthermore, the project design will follow *Montana's Administrative Rules for Forest Management* (*Administrative Rules of Montana* 36.11.401 through 36.11.456) and the Habitat Conservation Plan when it applies.

DNRC would also consider other opportunities that would produce long-term revenue to the state trusts. However, the proposals must show the ability to produce long-term revenue comparable to timber management. *Administrative Rules of Montana* 36.11.451 through 36.11.456 address the option of DNRC to accept applications for a *Timber Conservation License in Lieu of Timber Sale* and implement the bidding process for the License. A written notice of intent to request this License and the \$100 fee must be delivered to the Stillwater Unit office within 60 days of the date this Initial Proposal was provided. For further information, please contact Mike McMahon at Stillwater State Forest (406) 881-2670.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Generate revenue for the Common Schools Trust while ensuring forest productivity into the future.
- Promote biodiversity on State ownership by managing for appropriate or desired stand structures and species compositions based on ecological characteristics, such as topography, habitat type, disturbance regime, and unique characteristics.
- Contribute to the annual targets of timber-harvest volumes of DNRC and the Northwestern Land Office. DNRC is required by state law (77-5-221 through 223, MCA) to sell approximately 56.1 MMbf of timber annually and produce revenue over time.
- Apply *Best Management Practices* or meet design criteria necessary to promote long-term water quality during logging and road-construction operations. Road construction may include site improvements, new temporary construction, obliteration, and maintenance.

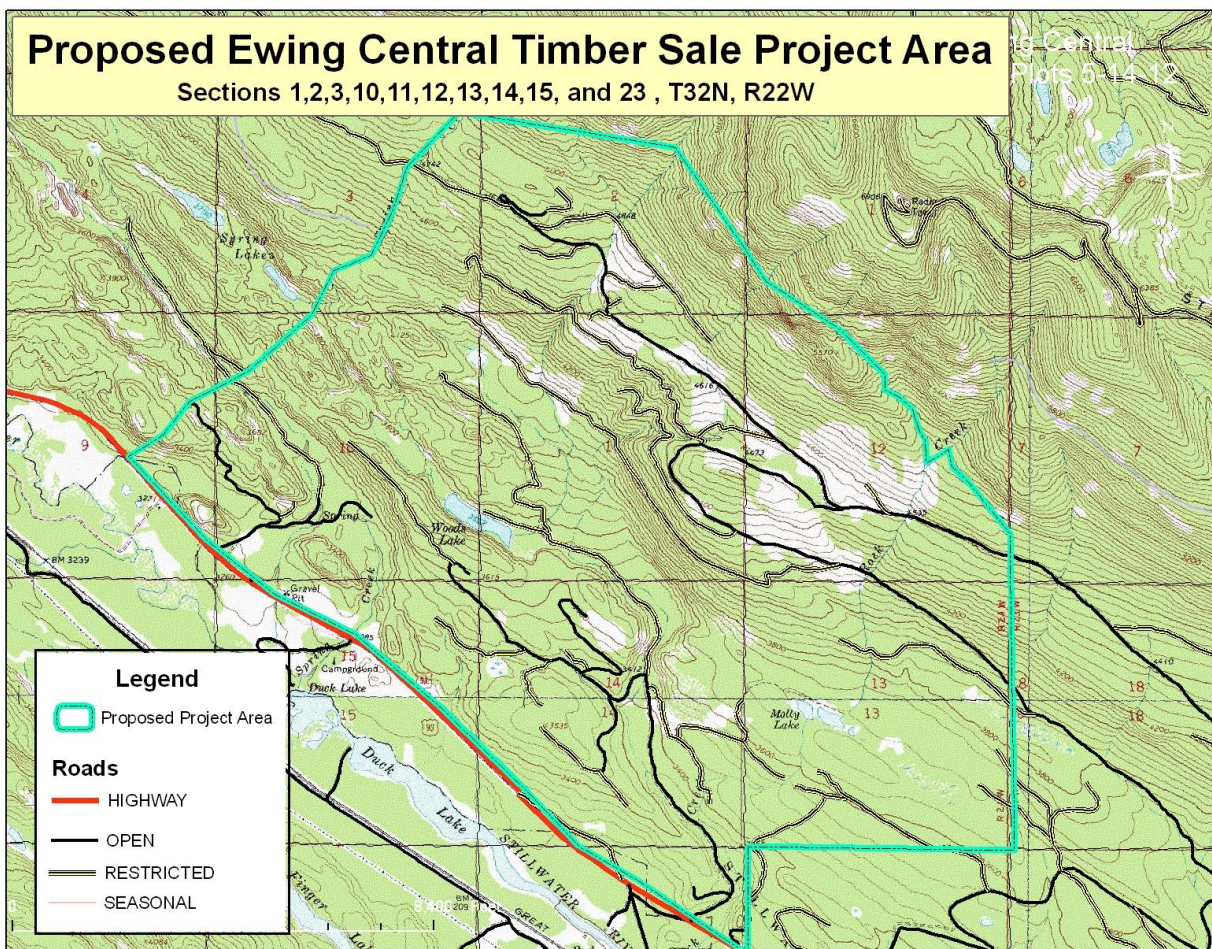
GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AREA AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE AREA TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES

1. The project area is located approximately 20 air miles northwest of Whitefish and east of U.S. Highway 93.
2. Most of the project area was historically comprised of the Douglas-fir/western larch timber covertypes. Due to mortality, salvage, and successional ingrowth, many of these stands have converted to mixed conifer. Portions of the project area contain older stands (150-years-plus in age). As with all stands in the project area, these areas are being analyzed for health and potential management opportunities.

Overstory removal, intermediate treatments, old growth maintenance, as well as regeneration treatments (such as seedtree with reserves) are being proposed as part of this project. The intent of these treatments is to emulate natural events such as fires or windstorms. The project objectives are to establish regeneration of the desired species mix, improve vigor/tree growth, meet the *Forest Management Rules* in relation to wildlife, fisheries, and water quality as well as provide improved access for potential fire suppression efforts.

3. The proposed roadwork includes incorporating Best Management Practices (BMPs) for site improvements. Existing roads will be used where feasible. In addition, temporary spur roads may be constructed to reach the proposed harvest areas; these segments of road would be closed following harvesting activities.
4. The State is still completing:
 - reconnaissance surveys,
 - timber-stand inventories,
 - watershed and sediment-source surveys,
 - noxious-weed surveys, and
 - an assessment of transportation/logging systems.

If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please fill out and return the following form, telephone the information, or e-mail Pete Evans at pevans@mt.gov. If DNRC does not receive a response by August 2, 2012, you will be removed from the mailing list.



HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS

Please submit your comments by July 29, 2012 to: Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit, c/o Pete Evans P.O. Box 164, Olney, MT 59927; call this information to 406-881-2371; or email to pevans@mt.gov.

If you do not have comments or concerns at this time, but wish to stay involved in the project, please email or telephone Pete Evans, or complete the following form and mail it to the address shown. If DNRC does not receive a response by August 2, 2012, you will be removed from the mailing list.

RE: EWING CENTRAL TIMBER SALE INITIAL PROPOSAL

I do not have concerns or comments at this time, but would like to stay involved in the process of project development.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

eMail: _____

Please send completed form to arrive by August 2, 2012.

Pete Evans
Montana DNRC Stillwater Unit
P.O. Box 164
Olney MT 59927
Telephone 406-881-2371; or email pevans@mt.gov